

O 291332Z JAN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7082  
INFO AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 000221

SIPDIS

FOR SCA/A, INL/AP, EUR/RPM  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG  
NSC FOR JWOOD  
OSD FOR USDP EDELMAN AND WILKES  
CENTCOM FOR CG CJTF-101 AND POLAD  
KABUL FOR COS USFOR-A

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/29/2019

TAGS: [AFIN](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: CORRECTED COPY - KARZAI COMMENTS ON WARPLANES, ANA  
ROLE, AND CIVILIAN CASUALTIES AT NMAA GRADUATION CEREMONY

Classified By: DCM Christopher W. Dell for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Summary. During a speech at the graduation of the first class from the National Military Academy of Afghanistan (NMAA), President Karzai declared that if the U.S. does not provide Afghanistan with military aircraft, he will look elsewhere. He also told Afghan National Army (ANA) graduates that their role was to defend the borders and independence of Afghanistan. Karzai added, that although they had not been trained to fight a domestic struggle, Afghanistan will soon be in charge of its own security and civilian casualties will be a thing of the past. End summary.

¶2. (U) On January 25, the National Military Academy of Afghanistan (NMAA) graduated its first class of 84 cadets. President Karzai, Ambassador Wood, COMISAF McKiernan, and many Afghan dignitaries attended the ceremony. During his speech, Karzai warned that if the U.S. does not provide Afghanistan with military aircraft, he will look elsewhere. The President is quoted as saying, "I have told America and the world to provide us with planes; otherwise, we will get them from other countries. We have lost patience. We cannot live without planes." Press reports linked Karzai's NMAA graduation remarks with other recent public statements in which he spoke of improving Afghan relations with Russia, and that Russia had offered to provide military assistance to Afghanistan if asked.

¶3. (U) While addressing the cadets directly, Karzai made additional remarks that were also certainly crafted for international ears. He said, "Officers, you are not trained to defend the villages and homes of Afghanistan, and be engaged in domestic war forever. No, you are trained to defend the borders and independence of this country. . . You are not trained for fighting and conducting house searches in our villages. Your job should be to guard this country's borders and defending this country's independence...We will soon reach the point where this country's security will be in our own hands, so that we will not suffer from civilian deaths. As we witnessed civilian casualties once again in Laghman yesterday." (Note. Reports vary on the outcome of a night raid by Coalition forces in Laghman Province on the evening of Friday, January 23. Karzai continues to claim publicly that 16 civilians were killed in the raid. End note.)

-----  
COMMENT  
-----

¶4. (C) Consistent with his recent pattern in public appearances, Karzai took the opportunity of his speech to "make hay" against Coalition partners, specifically the U.S., raising a series of his familiar complaints. His call for military aircraft echoes requests made through the

Ministry of Defense to the U.S. for some time. We do not believe Afghanistan is ready for such equipment, given the lack of trained Afghan personnel and logistical and support capabilities. Karzai's remarks reflect both strong personal views and probably a belief that public criticism of U.S. reticence to supply military aircraft and on civilian casualties, proven or not, will enhance his electoral chances later this year. If so, it may be a miscalculation as his remarks have been widely criticized in the press and Karzai's spokesman has already begun to walk the comments back.

WOOD